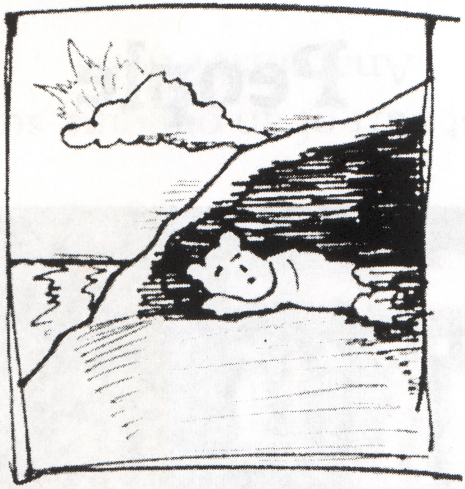
# Stories of the Bear People

The second part of a series of
Anarchist Myths

# MANIFESTO OF THE SLEEPING BEAR



A day will come when I can stand
Upright and with my people
A day will come with no more gray
The people will be free

Until then I'll sleep
Until then I'll dream
Until then I'll remember
Possibility

Today I have learned how to wait
and to know myself
Today I have begun to free
myself from all their lies

Tomorrow I will sleep
I will not be surprised
Tomorrow I can wake
when power will be gone

# INTRODUCTION

This is the second part of an anarchist mythology that started with the Stories of the Raccoon People. Myth is one of the few places where we get to decide the endings of our stories instead of being disappointed by the reality of fragile people and dangerous times. As in our anarchist dreams this doesn't mean that the endings are only going to be fades-to-music and happily-ever-after's but the endings will be on our scale, a human scale.

The Stories of the Bear People are about many of my friends. They are stories about anarchists whose lives have intersected my own. These stories are, by and large, not mine. They are stories I am telling about people that I care for and for the tortured path that leads us towards anarchy. We do not honor the path, or the people, a fraction as much as we should. The Bear People may not wish it any other way but I am not a Bear.

Honoring the Bear People is the way I can come to terms with the voices inside my head that want to fight pyrrhic battles, want to shout down those who tell me what to do (especially when it's for my own good) and want to stop being polite. The Bear People will not tell their own story and will likely disown this telling but I share them with you. It can be easy to forget that the Bear People are with us against the gray but we cannot abandon them to their own peculiarities.

To a time when all the people recognize the value in each other!

-Aragorn!

# BEAR ORIGINS

Like most stories, the story of the bear people starts with a story about people—a special group of people. During a time of great turmoil when many believed (when it was possible to believe) that the gray could be fought back and that the world could be free of them. During this great time there was a group that was very clear. They were clear about the organization of the gray. They were aware that people had confused themselves and their desires with those of the gray. In a time of such confusion the likelihood of a new world was slim indeed, or so they said.

They were right, of course. The people were hypnotized by the gray. People seemed to prefer the trappings of dreams rather than the dreams themselves. Dead-time-boxes, firewater, and a third of one's life taken away from one's friends and loves in the service of the gray.

When this time of turmoil ended and the Great Hypnotism began, this group of clear people exploded. Mostly this happened for the same old reasons that every group ends, petty jealousy and personal failings, but when something as clear, as crystalline, as this group explodes, it sends out shards with great velocity. These shards are what created the bear people.

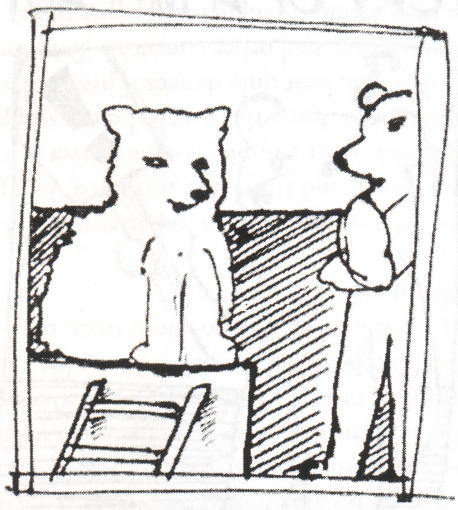
On occasion, if you catch a bear in the right mood, they will tell you about the time when they found a shard, met someone who held onto one, or how they hope to fuse shards back together to create something new that is totally clear. If you catch one in the right light, you admit hear an admission that Bears are true Romantics, in love with something that is in the past, in their imagination, that could possibly, just maybe, be re-created.

But the gray covers that land and the Great Hypnotism fills the minds of most everyone. Bears try, in their way, to pierce this. They shout and implore us to see the illusion for what it is—this is their great charm.

"If only they could see what I see" is the lament of the Bear People but doesn't inspire the people to action but to leaving the Bear People alone. For the Bears this becomes the precursor to hibernation, to escaping the world of well-intentioned incompetents.

And the remnants of the people who were clear? Some of them are still grubbing around. They have a haunted look in their eyes as if they have seen something so beautiful that focusing on this world takes too much effort. They tend to live in either the distant past or in the past of their memories. These ancients still have things to share but have largely lost the vocabulary to talk to those who have come since the Great Hypnotism. Their time is passing and, increasingly, they are falling silent and passing beyond.

## EVERY BEAR PERSON WAS ONCE A CUB



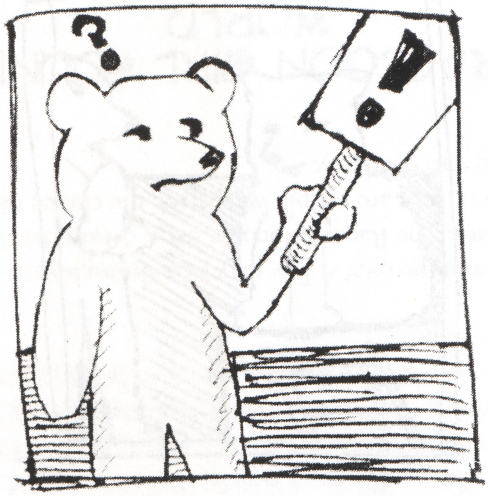
Few Bear Cubs survive to join the Bear People. Bears are such solitary creatures that when one of the people makes an effort to become a Bear Person they get no guidance. There is nothing to join. There are no rules. No Bear prevents them from making mistakes or wasting their time in unfruitful directions. Cubs must find their own way.

It's just as well, as the Bear People are not for everyone. They may be admirable because of their ferocity and discipline but the solitary life is self-selecting. The people tend to be social and to desire shared goals. The Bear People often have only one or two people with whom they spend any time with at all.

Cubs are brilliant to behold. Often times they are have nothing to learn from their elders and present nothing but fang when challenged. Other times they are fine Bear-like specimens properly outfitted in Bear Suits much too large for them but worn with such dignity and respect that it is impossible to deny them their goals.

Bear Cubs become Bear People when they realize that the great ideas of the Bear People are impossible. When they see that the project of defeating the gray will destroy them, will lose them far more than it gives, and isn't shared by any of their friends. When this impossibility is suffered for and still embraced is when a Bear Cub becomes one of the Bear People, but they must never speak of it. Loss is where the Bear People begin and it remains the empty space at their core.

## THE STORY OF A MISCAST SPELL



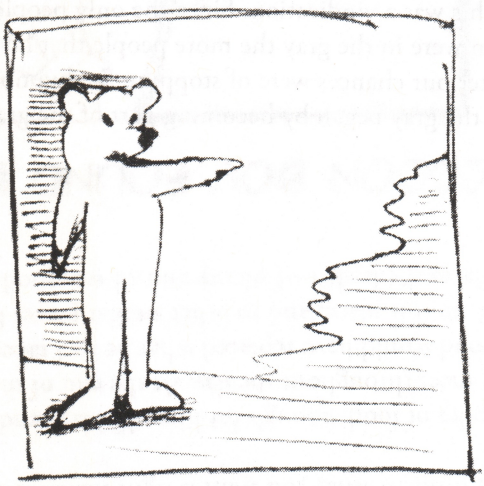
In the lore of the Bear People there is the idea of a magical moment. This moment is a switch where frowns will turn to smiles, honey will flow, and the might of the gray will fade away completely. This switch has happened before but only for a blink of an eye. And since most people were asleep they didn't notice. It was only for a moment, and then it was gone.

Now the Bear People try to chant and stomp and find ingredients for another magic time. They find one in a conversation with a stranger, another in a clever drawing, and yet another in a meeting where songs are sung about magic. These are the only songs that Bears will sing. Songs to make magic time!

Recently a group of Bear People put aside their ambivalence towards each other, and sat down with other people to discuss a traditional incantation of the magical moment. This involved a great deal of timing, bringing together hundreds of people and shaking the gray out of thousands more. Most magic, like love & turmoil, involves dispelling the hypnotism of the gray for a brief period of time. This isn't as difficult to achieve as you might suspect. Many who live deep within the gray notice moments of brightness, but the moments are fleeting and unpredictable. To dispel the gray at a specific time is a far more difficult task.

As is the wont of the Bear People, they couldn't agree with Beavers or with each other about how to proceed. They went in different directions and yelled at each other about timing and method. For many of the people this yelling seemed far more frantic than the energy put into the moment itself. And when the moment passed with some thunder but little lightning the Bear People pointed at each other and the people became wary of doing magic with Bears.

YOU ARE WASTING YOUR TIME!



Witty Bear was a Bear's Bear. For a people notoriously solitary and self-composed, Witty was famously alone. He was a true believer in the message that the people were but a whisper away from a shout that would knock aside the gray. As many people wanted to join this chorus and Witty had poetic and exciting tales of what was possible, many people listened to him respectfully. But Witty did not consider himself one of the people. Instead he believed that the people were out *there*. The people were among the gray and did not exist until they screamed out against themselves—and any relationship before this time was a lie.

Again and again he would show his fangs and declare "the people are irrelevant to the *real* people." In his own mind he saw these condemnations as resoundingly clear. So clear that those listening would stop what they were doing, what they chose to do, and start shouting with him. Instead the people just saw him as another Bear Person telling them what to do.

The Bear People have this problem in general. They believe that they know what is right and how to defeat the gray. They believe with such conviction that they end up telling everyone else (especially other Bears) that they are wrong, stupid, and part of the gray. There are two results to this. One is that Bears are solitary. Two is that many of the people who listen, and try to emulate the Bear People, are chased in to the gray, because Bears lead them to believe that there are *only* the Bear People and the gray. As very few people are actually interested in being alone, they allow the gray to swallow them instead of finding others.

For Witty Bear this was a vindication. Since the only people who stop the Great Hypnotism were in the gray the more people that he chased back to the gray, the better our chances were of stopping the hypnotism. For Witty the fight against the gray began by becoming part of the gray.

# THE BEAR WHO STARED INTO THE GRAY

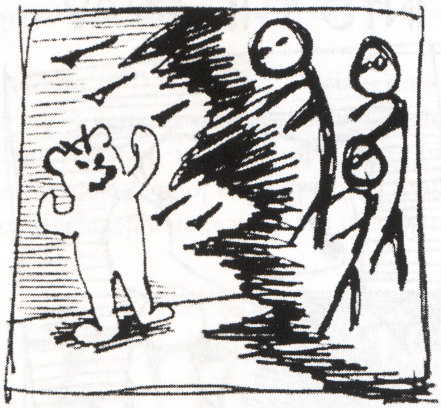
Tormented as a child, Irascible Bear was scarred by the time he realized he was one of the Bear People. His scars didn't temper his desire for another way to be, for a future where other children would not be beaten and harassed by family and friends, but they interfered with his ability to find a place like this in his own life. Instead Irascible Bear's life was a constant battle. He battled with friends. He battled with lovers. He battled with anyone who disagreed with him and only took the battles seriously when they were taken seriously by those he battled with. He played rough because the scars made it hard for him to feel.

The numbness reinforced his inclination towards solitude.

One day Irascible Bear was playing with a new friend. His friend and he disagreed about many things (just about everything, in fact) and it was turning into a fine beginning. But his new friend didn't play the same way and chased Irascible Bear away with fang and claw. This new friend even called down the gray onto Irascible Bear who scurried away and spent an evening hiding in a park.

This would not do! "What is done to me I will do a thousand times back" says Irascible Bear and with broken claw and chipped tooth he saw that his only, lonely, recourse was to summon the gray. Naturally the gray did not follow Irascible Bear's desires. Irascible Bear stared into the gray against one of the people and continues to be touched by this.

# THE BEAR VERSUS THE MOB



In the not so distant past there was a day that will live on in memory and song. It is still talked about today as if it happened only yesterday. During this amazing day the air was very crisp, a whisper of the first winter breeze.

The day is remembered because of a tragedy. This tragedy was a tragedy for the gray and has since been inflicted upon the people as the justification to end all justifications. But on the day itself it was difficult to distinguish between something that should terrify the gray and something that should scare people too. The people didn't help matters much. Always wary of the gray they sent up a great alarm, that we were next, that the end was nigh, and that much more was coming for us and for others. A gathering was called of all the people in the area. On the agenda was the hope that we could turn this day into a chance to work together on a common project, to use this opportunity for ourselves, rather than to just run and hide.

The gathering worked out as many do. The people were in full regalia, Raccoon, Bear, Beaver, and Salmon People. People were there who you almost never see except for during special occasions, like when gray attacks. While there was a happy atmosphere because of seeing each other, it was tempered with the fear of the gray.

The people are generally of two minds regarding the gray. They either believe that the gray is watching their every move and therefore they must take every precaution to seem innocuous, or they believe that the gray, out of ambivalence, ignores the people entirely. Either way, the people tend to both over- *and* under-estimate the gray. The people tend to respond to the gray rather than put the gray into the situation of having to respond to them.

"What should we do?" asked the Beaver person who sat in the center of the room. Simple questions often have unforeseen consequences and this one was no different. Just as the people were of two minds regarding the gray, they were of several minds regarding the role of the people in defeating the gray. The question was never whether or not the gray should end but how.

Simple questions often hide not-so-simple things. And talking about not-so-simple things isn't easy and is usually avoided, even by the people. This is where the Bear People come in. In times of difficulty they can be relied on to make one thing very clear. It may not be the thing that they intend, in fact often the Bear-person-who-speaks-truth is blamed for it rather than celebrated, but in times of difficulty Bear People roar and everyone listens. During this meeting the Beaver People were confused about what to do but knew that something had to be done; something had to be built, to block the torrent of the gray, but they were wrong. The gray both couldn't be stopped, it was only capable of running itself down.

When our friend the Bear Person roared that day no one wanted to hear it. They chased the Bear out of the room. They proceeded to holler that the Bear should be ignored, that their confusion was actually far more coherent than the Bear's protestation. But they didn't end up building anything new. They didn't stand in front of the gray as it rolled over anything in its path and eventually the gray slowed down and found something else to do.

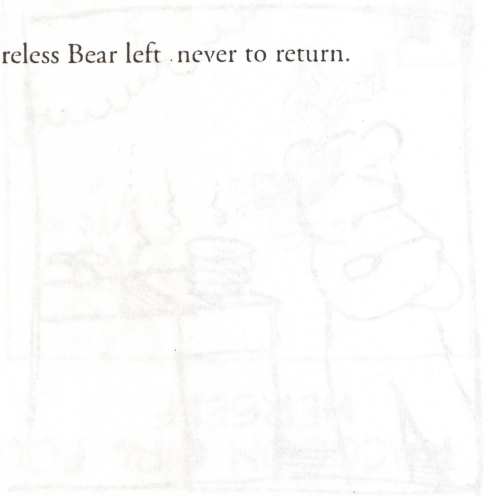
## THE BEAR WHO WOULDN'T DO THE DISHES

The people have found ways to live that are different from the gray. Instead of living in poisoned family units, the people tend to live in groups. This allows them the space to discover the pleasure of each other's company on a day-to-day basis and to make a little space outside the gray. One of the consequences of living this way is a certain kind of formality. Instead of telling one another to clean up after themselves or that repairs need doing, an event would be called for. This event could be comprised of many things, like discussions about feelings, about things better said to each other (but instead said about empty ideas); about things the people need to do. These formal discussions would often be remembered on special pieces of paper used for nothing else. This formality hides the ways that even the people have a hard time with the Great Hypnosis. Most everyone who joins the people brings the gray with them.

Tireless Bear hated formality. "I will never wear fancy clothes and I will never do something written on special paper" Every time another formal occasion was called Tireless would make sure to travel. Every time the people would remind Tireless about the special paper Tireless would make a joke about freedom. "For the people to be free we must burn the paper. We must talk, yell, and scream!"

The people grew tired of Tireless' proclamations and during their next formal occasion used a new special paper to make a list that everyone would sign. When Tireless Bear returned and was told to sign the paper he pleaded with the people to understand that this was against everything they claimed to want. He gnashed his teeth and yelled, stomped and pounded, but none of the people would listen.

The next day Tireless Bear left never to return.

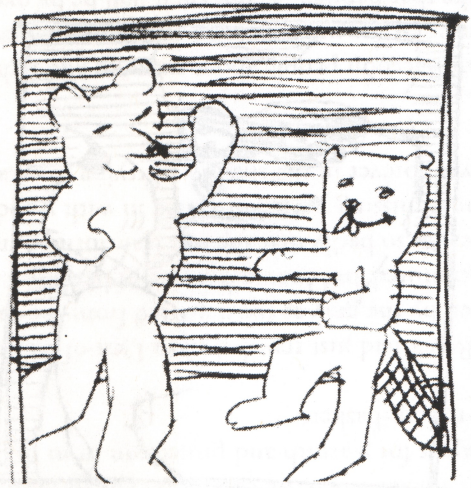


# THE BEAR WHO WOULD BE A RACCOON

Deliberate Bear was well known around these parts. When she would come around, it was always a treat. The people would come together for a great meal and hear stories about where Deliberate had been and where she was going. After the meal everyone was happy to clean up after Deliberate, she were a guest and she offered far more than she took with the stories she told. But after the third meal the people would wait for Deliberate to clean up her fair share and usually she did. Or at least she tried.

It was not that Deliberate was a malicious Bear Person or even unusually incompetent. Deliberate was a Bear who wanted to be a Raccoon. It was a funny thing to watch because when the people would make plans for a task or a meal Deliberate would never be around. She would be absorbed in Bear People things, making plans of her own. When asked to participate or to contribute, as often as not Deliberate would say "That is not a Bear thing to do!" and usually she was right. When the Raccoon People would make a score Deliberate was sure to be there during the sharing. When the Raccoons would sing Deliberate was sure to listen in. But Deliberate would not share under conditions other than her own because that would not be the Bear Person thing to do.

# BEARS THAT WOULD RATHER HAVE FRIENDS THAN BE RIGHT



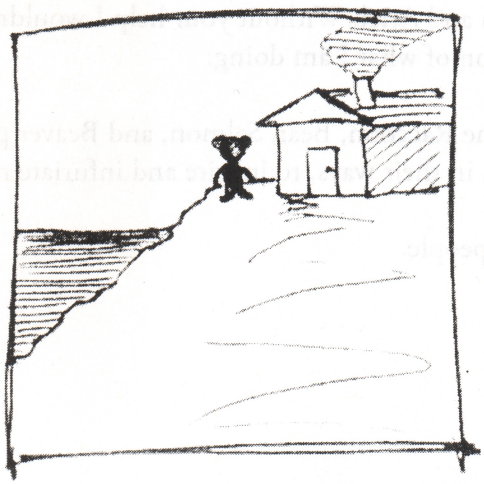
The thought that keeps the Bear People awake at night is that all their efforts are for naught. That the gray will keep on being gray. That the people will not make true on any of their promises. That the knowledge the Bear People have collected and stored away will never used by anyone. That when they are gone they will not be remembered.

The Bear People divide on the question of their own project. The Sleeping Bears believe that their efforts stand on their own. The conscience of the Sleeping Bears is clear. When they sleep it is a dreamless sleep.

There are also Prowling Bears, who are restless. Since they do not have enough numbers, and are not strong enough to shake the world, they spend time with the rest of the people. This can be frustrating as the people tend towards play and do not maintain good focus on the projects of the Bear People—but they are the only ones who seem interested at all.

The world turns and the Bears who would fight the gray must sit down with the rest of the people. They must party with the Raccoon People. They must work with the Beaver People. They must dream with the Salmon People. It is an unusual Bear who can stand such a fate, patiently waiting for the time when the fight commences and gritting their teeth until then.

# THE BEARS STAND ALONE



On the land of the dark hill lives one of the few groups of Bear People. They only see each other for meals and otherwise work on their separate tasks, their separate lives. But they share the same plan. They despise the gray and acknowledge that each one helps in his or her own efforts and that they help each other in return.
An unusual group, these Bears.

The land of the dark hill is what has forged them. As with any important place, when the Bear People came upon it they had one idea about how life there was going to be. The land had another idea entirely. The land was persuasive.

The Bear People are not a lazy people, quite the opposite, but Bears who live in the gray-weed-forest find it hard to exert themselves without helping the gray, so they often do very little. In the land of the dark hill it is quite a bit harder to help the gray, or to even find it, and shade has its own demands.

Off of the dark hill come great things as a result of these Bear People. Flavorful food, skillfully grown and prepared. Raucous company. Shelters that smell of the land and its demands. The dark hill presents a hard question to all the other Bear People. If you would truly stand alone you both have to do it with others and you have to leave the gray behind.

Thanks to Artnoose for the artistic help.

Thanks to Leona and Ariel. Without your help I wouldn't be capable of doing a fraction of what I am doing.

Thanks also to the Raccoon, Bear, Salmon, and Beaver people I know and who helped, in their ways, to inspire and infuriate me.

You are still my people.

ARAGORN!

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Berkeley, CA 94703

Under this disguise he advertised his choices as a story. His story was judged and laughed at by the Bear, Deer, and Beaver people but the Raccoons knew it for what it was: their story. He rode this whirlwind until one day it stopped spinning and what was waiting for his feet to touch the ground? The gray. The gray tried to consume Raccoon Fortune, to shape him into their device, but instead he sang about his happiness and courage. He sang what we all believe.

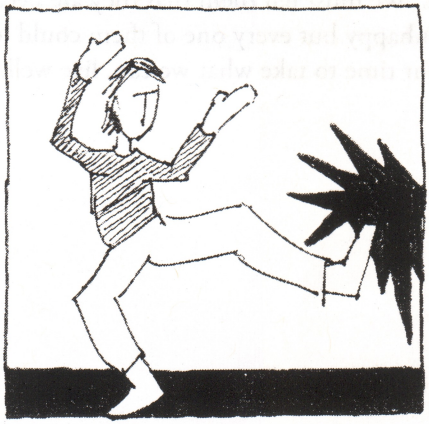
"I am not sorry. I would do it again and again. You try to stop me and you try to stop a shadow because we live in the dark and return when the coast is clear."

When the sun sets Raccoon Fortune meets with the other Raccoon people and says "I could never do it alone. I collect your stories, the stories of our friends, and I share them with strangers. Some of these strangers join us, some of these strangers learn to appreciate the moonlight but the rest are not our enemies. We must tell them that they are because they are gray or sluggish or unhappy but every one of them could join us, could be our friend. This is our time to take what we can, live well, and wait and see what happens."

As it turns out, having no name can be a real challenge. You cannot be referred to, you cannot be called to dance or sing, and while the gray may not find you, neither can any of the Raccoons, Bears, or people outside of a very small group. This may be the best way to live in a world so very gray but it also is a way that hasn't much room for spark, dissonance, and the loving chaos that the Raccoons are known for.

The nameless Raccoon became referred to as just that. A wave of the hand and everyone knew who you were talking about. A nod, wink, and a 'one-who-must-not-be-named' foretold the nameless one's arrival. A hug and an 'until we see you again' their departure. In a world without gray it could be that none of us have names but until then there is the Raccoon-with-no-name.

## THE STORY OF THE RACCOON WHO GOT CAUGHT BUT STAYED FREE



There is a story about a Raccoon who hid in the wide open. How he did it is hard to believe: so hard that the telling should be filled with laughter instead of whispers. This is a tale so hard to believe that it must be told twice. Once when you wake in the morning and another when you lay down to rest at night. One story is about the sun rising, another about it setting.

When the sun rises our friend Raccoon Fortune did what we all want to do. Raccoon Fortune set about freeing Raccoons and others who had been imprisoned by the gray. He did it with malice. He did it with glee. By the moon and river he scurried about making sure that some gray were no longer able to contain our friends. As a result Fortune had to hide from his past. He took on a disguise.

She continued to move from place to place and spread the word of the Raccoons and The Great Escape. She would share songs and dance about that time. "The time of Escape will be one when the gray will be of the same size as the people and we can live openly instead of in shadow and rain." The Escape has been talked about by generations of Raccoons who have been hurt and bruised for the telling.

Having been deeply bruised Rover believed that what had hurt her had to be removed in the same way. Her heart was so full that everyone she touched remembered her lesson.

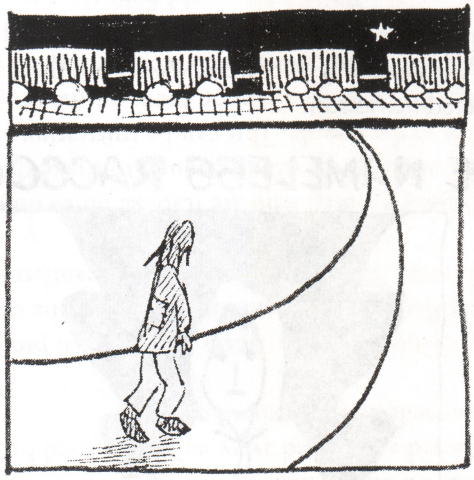
## THE NAMELESS RACCOON

As important as donning the cloak, coat, or hat that marks one as of the Raccoon people (and separate from the gray) is the process of taking a name. Unlike the world of the gray where you are inflicted with labels that come from horrible stories of sacrifice and vengeance, the self-naming of the Raccoon people is a time for celebration and game. Usually names are taken from favored things and can tell a short story of an accomplishment or friend.

There was one Raccoon person who was so broken by the gray that this person refused to take on a new name. They knew that the gray would come one day and wanted to guard against that by being untraceable. If you have no name you have no shadow and in a world that remembers everything only those who live in, as opposed to have, shadow will be free. Or so our nameless friend believed.

The bear was flustered and tried to explain that Raccoon Boy had set the fire for no good reason but there were no Raccoons around to confront the gray. They had already gone to laugh and sleep, and tell stories of the time that they left the bear holding the bag.

## RACCOON-WITH-BRUISES



The gray force people to live hard lives. To get from place to place we must sit on line-rolling-baskets hidden from their eyes. We must run from them when it stops. We must carry wet skins with us when we travel for fear that the gray will stop in a place where we cannot breathe otherwise. We must bring layers upon layers for warmth and protection from the hard cold surfaces of the line-rolling-baskets.

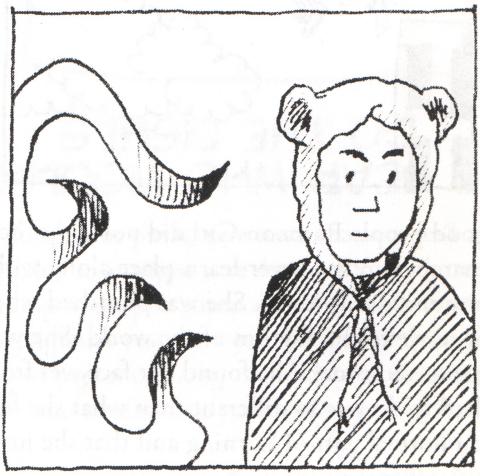
One day Raccoon Rover had just traveled from Den-of-Roses to Gray-by-the-Bay and was seen by the gray as she departed from the yard. A chase ensued. Rover was captured and beaten because of her burden and their sticks. Rover was beaten so badly that she was transformed from a whole Raccoon to one whose missing parts were filled in with wood and rage. She became one who lived forever in the shadow of trying to escape and being captured.

She taught the other Raccoon people about running and fighting. "There is no chance we will ever escape until they are gone, so we must decide how we are going to make that happen. Many say it will be by overrunning them with our numbers, I say it should be by tooth and claw. We must make a Great Escape!"

be told what to do. **This** is what my body wants to do!" She said and began to dance. Her dance was fierce and dangerous as it kicked up gravel on the top of the never-learn-place. The gray tried to slow her down. "You will hurt yourself. Let's get down off of here and talk about it." Never understanding what was going on.

After some time and after her face had dried Raccoon Girl jumped from the never-learn-place and was gone.

## HOW THE RACCOONS TRICKED THE BEAR

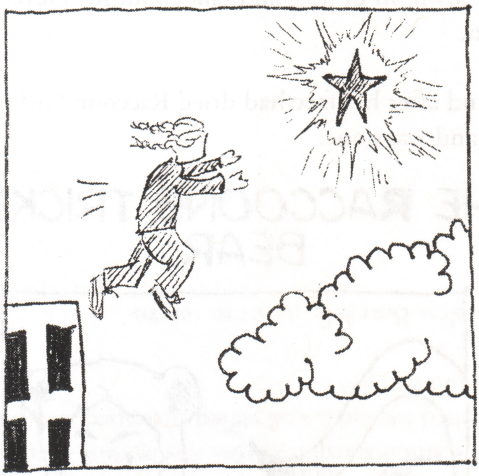


The Bear people are not the Raccoon people. They can be interesting and they are fierce fighters but they are not particularly good companions or much in the way of dancers.

One evening at the pond all the local Raccoons were playing and shouting in the same place as a particularly gruff bear. He was known for growling and blocking the Raccoons in the past and this time spent half the evening chasing Raccoons away for the sake of fishing and quiet.

At one point Raccoon boy set a fire with low flame but much smoke. This drove the bear to nuisance because the Raccoon people continued to play and not take seriously the bear's bellow to carry the pond to the fire. Eventually the smoke summoned the gray and they asked the bear why there was a fire? Didn't he know that the correct way to have a fire is in a cave? On a stick? Gated? Guarded?

# HOW RACCOON GIRL FOUND HERSELF



Like many other good people Raccoon Girl did not know herself, and had to be found. She marched to the never-learn-place along with all of the others that she knew and didn't know. She was punished when she would jump out of line or move to the rhythm of the world. She was forced to move her body by rote and order. She found her face wet from sadness because what she had to do was so different than what she felt. She was told that being sad was a normal part of learning and that she just needed to get over it.

When she did she was rewarded with gifts and smiles. "You are special indeed!" exclaimed her teachers and together they hatched a plan to make Raccoon Girl (who was known by her dead name at the time) a performer. She would move her body for other people and everyone would appreciate her skill and grace.

One day she had a performance for important people. These are people like others except more so. Special indeed was this day, everyone made a great fuss, but Raccoon Girl felt nothing. She went to the roof of the never-learn-place where she was to perform and cried and remembered her sadness. When they found her they made a great cry "Important people are waiting on you. The performance must begin now!" "Why?" asked Raccoon Girl. "I don't want to dance for them. I don't want to dance for you or anyone but me. I want to dance. I don't want to wear uncomfortable clothing and

controlling of every little thing: controlling food and shelter and working. How he was learning how to build when the gray captured him. The beavers did not like the gray but, with tears in their eyes, let the gray in to capture Charming Revenge for fear that the gray would destroy Beaver dams and waterways. If the gray had noticed the Beaver projects they probably would have destroyed them. Instead they just took Charming Revenge.

The stories of how the gray treat people in the name of sameness were horrible indeed. They would force solitude and the carrying of weights. They would berate, insult and inflict physical punishment. The gray actually would try to break living people from their dreams in order to make them gray. They would call this education.

A sweet boy, a little too distracted by the stars in his eyes to notice the ground beneath his feet, Charming Revenge had to escape the gray when he took on the cloak of the Raccoon people. When Charming Revenge finally got away and took the cloak he refused to ever take it off. He would wear nothing but his Raccoon cape. He would not even acknowledge the color gray, there was only black, brown and dirt. Over time he began to show signs of wear. Others would say, "jump in the river, fill a basket with water, or at the very least jump into the sandy banks and settle down the smell!" But this would not do for Charming Revenge. Like many of the Raccoon people he still lived in the gray-weed-forest and was limited by the way they did things. "I will not hurt the water by forcing it through the gray-creek-that-runs-home. I would rather offend the gray sensibility than bow to the way that they would force us to live!" This quieted most of his friends, but satisfied few of them.

Some Beavers said to him "If you do not bend your knee you cannot come into our home because you offend us with your smell."
So he sat outside. It would rain and he would say, "Even the rain is corrupt in a gray world, filled with gray waste and their death-worship-life. I will wait until they are gone and the rain is clean enough for me."

Still he waits. The water and the air are no cleaner.

The day that Raccoon Boy found himself everything changed. No longer did he see the different faces of what he had long suffered. Everyone around him was uniformly gray. Everything was brighter at night and even mundane places showed themselves to be filled with secrets and treasure. He tried to sing to family and friends, to show them the way out of the gray but they were not interested. "Responsibility" was their refrain and this was what he left behind as he put on his Raccoon coat and left them forever. "You will not see me again until you stop turning everything into formula and routine. I will not grind myself to death with habit!"

In becoming Raccoon Boy he didn't know but that his song was the song that every Raccoon person must find if they are to find themselves. Solitary and social the Raccoons come to the song and sing along: discordant and loud enough to scare away the gray.

## THE RACCOON AND THE RAIN

Like many who have taken on the cloak at an older age, Raccoon Charming Revenge felt as though he had to be extra loud to be heard over the raucous laughter and singing of his friends. He didn't, of course: his exciting tales of escape from the gray were reason enough to listen to his ideas and plans even if you disagreed with them.

He told of how he had been hypnotized by the Beaver people as a young boy. How they convinced him that happiness lay in the building and

Why bother going inside if what you want is right there for the taking?

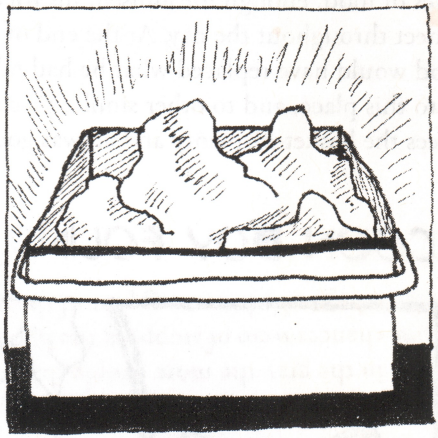
And take he did: piles of food, enough for himself, his friends, and every stranger he would meet throughout the day. At the end of the day he would return and more food would have replaced what he had taken earlier. He brought his friends to this place, and to other similar places he would find, and called these places the basket-of-plenty and all was good.

## HOW RACCOON BOY FOUND HIMSELF

Every seven suns it was the same. Dress in white and stand with other boys and shout about how much higher and better than you someone else was. Obey an old man who wasn't very nice and a lady who kept everyone in line.

One day was different. Nothing would ever be the same. Instead of singing someone else's song, our friend decided to sing his own song. The words were about how no one is higher than anyone else and that the dead should stay underground and not live fuller lives than those who sit in rows and kneel. The rhythm was to the sound of the other boys hollering and fussing because he wasn't following along and because he stepped out of line. The punctuation was pushing the old man out of the way.

# THE STORY OF FINDING THE BASKET-OF-PLENTY



There was a time, when passing through the gray-weed-forest, that Raccoon people had to endure the orders and sermons of the gray in order to eat. Threats of fire, exclusion, and an eternity of pain made associating with the gray an obviously dangerous activity. Many of the people wouldn't even take their food because the flavor was too gray.

The ones who refused to endure this would beg other gray for scraps and take what they got. Scorn, coldness, pity, fear, and an occasional boot was what the gray exacted for the meager gifts they would bestow. There had to be a better way!

Finding objects was always a talent that Raccoon people had, with an eye out for shiny, useful, and edible things in the world. Sometimes this would be in a never-share-place where they would be chased after the simplest taste or attempt at sharing. The gray had all kinds of rules about how to behave and seemed particularly averse to sharing. This could be particularly hard for Raccoons passing through.

One day Raccoon Fortune was passing by a never-share-place with a pain in his belly. Instead of lamenting the fact that the gray had a guard (along with noise makers and fire) placed at the entrance, he decided he would sneak in the back. Because after all, if they face in one direction you must come at them from another. In going around the backside of the never-share-place Fortune was amazed to discover that the very things he desired were actually piled up in the back. They were inside a hard-basket placed next to his goal.

light and dark was such that laughter rang out. Her leaps would push the fire into the shapes of baskets, bears and oaks. Her breath was fire across the sky. Her only thought was on the beat of feet against the flame and the Great-Plain-Above.

Over time the dance changed. There were more things to bounce off of and to listen to. The sounds became more complex as echoes, melodies, and rhythms began to materialize. As she danced, Raccoon Girl searched for these sounds and would move in new ways to reflect what was new in what she heard. At one point the new movement caused Raccoon Girl to stumble and fall. Where her head fell she called home for a time. She named it Resting-Dance-Place and learned how to climb trees, cool her feet in a stream, and make acorn mash.

Around her Raccoon Girl found many dancing partners and proceeded to share with them her breath and time. The turtle is a slow partner but produces lovely sounds and never complains. The beaver is a dutiful dancer learning only a few moves and doing them well (before stopping and returning to beaver tasks). The bear only dances if prodded and poked and then only for a moment as they had other concerns. The salmon made wonderful dancers as they would fly higher and never forget a dance move. But it was the other Raccoons who kept Raccoon Girl from flying off Resting-Dance-Place altogether.

But the time did come to stop dancing, and when it did many forgot about the time when the Resting-Dance-Place resounded with song and the joy of moving. They made decisions about when the right time to dance, play and eat would be. They believed that they owned things. These people became the gray and appear to cover Resting-Dance-Place with their weeds and trash but feasting below, often out of sight, are the Raccoon people waiting for the gray to walk away, to return to where they are from, to remember to dance.

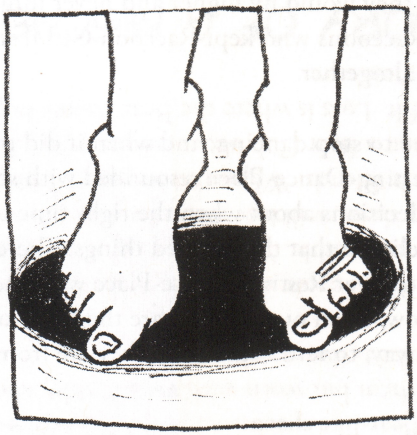
Above us all is Raccoon Girl spinning about and bounding from place to place leaving trails upon the sky and shapes to remember her by. Raccoon Girl has promised us nothing, but the rhythm of her feet is still under our feet reminding us of what she found.

When he left our house my parents stopped speaking to each other. Something about his visit reminded them that they were not working out the way that they expected and each of them began to look for something else. Other people passed through, glass was broken, voices were raised not in song and eventually feet walked in different directions.

Later in life I found more Raccoon people. They usually did not have time for me because I was looking and they had already found. They were a merry people, running in groups, speaking in code, dressing like explosions and carousels. Bottles in hand, holes in shoes, scabs on joints; these were a people worth knowing...

Who are the Raccoon people? A few may pass through your life or you may see them at the park. The Raccoon people live a dream that we find on the tips of our tongues. They are people who make the choice not to be in a world of plodding and drudgery.

## HOW RACCOON GIRL FOUND THE WORLD



Before this time the Great-Plain-Above was dark. The only light was from the unknowable fire. Elsewhere there was only darkness and all was calm. But there was Raccoon Girl, the one who would dance alone, the smiling shadow, the first one to the celebration and the last one to leave.

Raccoon Girl hopped from the fire to Great-Plain-Above. She never burnt, she never stopped. She did not tire. Her delight at the leaps and shifting of

# WHO ARE THE RACCOON PEOPLE?

Much like us, the Raccoon people need food, shelter and each other. You have probably seen them around: in the corner of your eye, racing to or from one shadow to the next, or in some industrial setting scavenging metal or food. When your eye rests on one of the people you will notice a few things. The Raccoon people have a fashion that is both sensible and flamboyant, layers of cloth that wear well, can be covered up for blending in and that scream at the lines and cut of normal fashion. The Raccoon people do not like straight lines, sharp corners, or cold floors. This does not mean that they do not suffer these things; they just don't suffer in silence.

The Raccoon people live by simple rules: live life to its fullest, no concession to a world of misery, and run to fight another day.

I first met one of the Raccoon people when I was only a child. He was visiting my parents, dressed in the fashion of the time, and he treated himself to our food and our company. I had never met a happier person. I alternated between bouncing on his knee, wrestling with him over the last piece of bread, and racing around the jungle of our backyard with him, an adult unlike any I had ever met before, or since.

He left behind a little buckskin figurine to remember him by. "Rub this between your palms and say my name. I will not promise that I will come back to you but I promise that my memory will, and often times that will be enough."

# INTRODUCTION

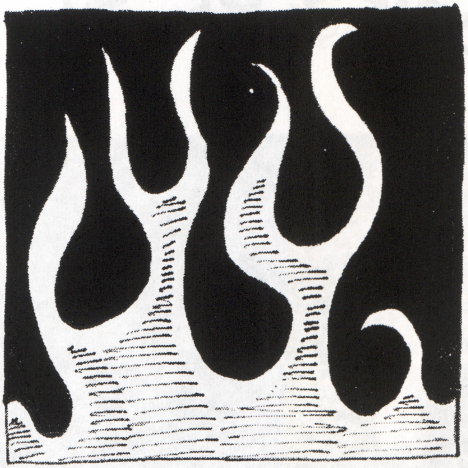
This is the beginning of an anarchist mythology. We live in a world haunted by other people's gods and stories. Stories of leaders and subjects, victories and defeats, jealousy and malice, may frame this world but they do not frame us.

Mythology is an important part of culture. It is the way that true stories can be told without getting distracted by the fact that nothing is ever as simple as truth. I would argue that anarchist mythologies have suffered by being confused with anarchist history.

Here are the first of several (at least three) sets of stories about anarchists we know. At least half of these stories are about real events that I have first or second hand knowledge of. The rest are about the Raccoon people generally. While I am sharing these stories they are not mine. My deepest goal with these stories in particular are that they pass into the hands of the Raccoon people themselves and are shared through song and transform through the memory of the people into the truths I can only peek at.

I only ask to be invited to dance along.

-Aragorn!



Oh come dance with me, Raccoons
We've feet and the time to share
We are the people who have chosen life
More than they would know

Oh come run with me, Raccoons
they can't understand
grayness and the death of routine
from which we run away

Oh come sing with me, Raccoons
We've been quiet for far too long
we must sing the stories
of our passions and desires

Oh come search with me, Raccoons
food and rest aren't easy to find
Let's find the world beneath
where we would rather be

(We dance) because we are alive.
We are not of shadow or gray
but of bone, fur and high spirits.
To life!

# Stories of the

# Raccoon People

The first part of an ongoing series of
Anarchist Myths